

Capitol Planning Commission Site Features Committee Meeting Minutes
November 15, 2016
Facilities Management Center, Main Conference Room
(10:33am – 11:45am)

Committee Members Present:

Carol Grant, Committee Chair
Director Janet Phipps

Members Absent:

Bill Dikis, CPC Chair
Matthew Harris
Jesse Lewis

Department of Administrative Services (DAS) Staff Present for All or Portions of the Meeting:

Suzy Trotter, Department of Administrative Services / General Services
Tim Ryburn, Department of Administrative Services / General Services

Others Present for All or Portions of the Meeting

Meg Schneider, Senior Vice President of Business Resources and Community Development, Greater Des Moines Partnership
Brian Willham, Sr. Traffic Engineer, City of Des Moines
Dr. Chris LoRang, Historic East Village Board President and Capitol Chiropractic
Larry James, Counsel with Faegre Baker Daniel and Urban Land Institute

Call to Order and Introductions

The meeting was called to order at 10:33 a.m. by Carol Grant, followed by roll call. The scheduled meeting of the Site Features Committee was held without quorum. No action items would be voted on.

Approval of Agenda

The agenda was reviewed.

Approval of Meeting Minutes for August 10, 2016, Meeting

Action to approve minutes was tabled for the next Site Features Committee Meeting.

Des Moines Walkability Study Presentation

Meg Schneider began the presentation stating what the expected achievements will be to recap the Des Moines Walkability Study, the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of the study and to communicate the developments with regards of what they can do on E. Grand Ave.

The Urban Land Institute, City of Des Moines, and the Greater Des Moines Partnership are leading the one year study looking at the streets in the Des Moines downtown area. Meg Schneider passed out the map of the area in review. The team is looking at all intersections in the area of study to improve the right of way, create a safer area and improve the economic vitality of the downtown. The team feels there are several opportunities of enhancements and connectivity taking advantage of the momentum of the East Village, Western Gateway, and Court Ave. areas.

The study includes the downtown area with the north border being E. University, the east border is E. 15th St., the south border is the Raccoon River, and the west border is MLK Jr. Parkway. This area covers all the entrance and exits road for the approximately 7,500 downtown commuters on any given day. The team wants to maximize the potential right of way and not compromise the simple commute to downtown.

To date the team has been fact finding and collecting data since May of 2016. The City of Des Moines started taking traffic measurements at every intersection in June of 2016. Ultimately, the scenarios the team will be looking at can be loaded into the modeling system to see the traffic flow as they start to look at the areas. Meg Schneider passed the Des Moines Walkability Study Fact Sheet to the members of the meeting. This sheet provided an outline of the opportunities. Meg Schneider stated other communities have seen an economic benefit such as East Village and Ingersoll. The changes to the Ingersoll corridor in the zip code area of 50312 reported a 23% increased retail sales tax since 2008. The final argument from the Partnership is to continue to make the community a place where people want to live and work.

Larry James continued from the real estate perspective commenting that the objective is to slow the traffic down, but still allow traffic to get through, as well as to incorporate all users; walkers, bikers, transit, and cars. The area is fortunate to have plenty of right of way to work with especially on E. Grand Ave. The city once had a trolley line and the right of way continues. Currently, E. Grand Ave. has more right of way than is needed to accommodate the current traffic. The goal of the team is to make the traffic safer and more attractive for those walking and biking from one location to another. The City of Des Moines has a trail system in the metro area that is unprecedented in the country. The team is looking at tying the trail system to the right of way for those walking and biking. Example would be the walkers from the River Trail to the Capitol or biking on MLK to the Capitol. The team is looking at the routes with excess capacity to have a protected bike lane. Unlike the Ingersoll bike lane in the middle of the road, the team is looking at a bike lane closer to the curbs. The team is looking at a protected bike lane next to the curb with a row of parking, then the moving traffic. In short, the row of parking would be between the moving vehicles and bikers. This idea has been done around the country and considered a best practice. The team is not proposing bike lanes on every street. Larry James continued to compare larger cities such as Chicago where people walk several blocks on a nice day to the Lake Front and back. However, it is thought that people in Des Moines do not think of walking from the Capitol to the Sculpture Park. The team feels if there is a safe and interesting walk people would be more willing to walk several blocks. The team has been meeting with many downtown corporations to receive support and getting input from the community. Larry James noted the Capitol Complex is a key component of the study and understands that for anything the team does they want to have the support of the Capitol Complex.

Director Phipps asked the team in terms of walkability, what is the attraction east of the river. The Capitol Complex employees can easily walk to the East Village but want to know what would attract the walkers east from the west side of the river. Larry James responded stating the sidewalks on Grand Ave. are narrow and unpleasant when traveling from 801 Grand to the River Walk. The team feels there are infrastructure opportunities that can be accomplished. An example would be E. Grand Ave. with its several lanes of traffic designed like a highway with fast traffic. The team is looking at what would happen if E. Grand Ave. was changed to 2 lane traffic without disrupting commuters thus creating a safer and more attractive walking environment. The team does not have funding to make infrastructure changes but would propose to restripe pavement to evaluate if the change would be beneficial. Then look for funding to make the change permanent.

Brian Willham continued with the City of Des Moines perspective. The 2015 City of Des Moines Comprehensive Plan, transportation section, prioritizes the review of walking, biking, and transit; not just vehicular traffic. This is good timing for the new City Transportation Master Plan for the entire City which will be looking for new ways to travel. Larry James added that visitors could park once and walk to several places downtown such as adding parking on E. Grand Ave. to have additional parking.

Chris LoRang added to the discussion from the East Village perspective. Meetings between the City of Des Moines Manager and the Partnership discussed E. Grand Ave as the first project because the bridge is closed and people have already adapted their vehicle and walking routes to accommodate the current closure of E. Grand Ave due to the bridge construction. The preliminary data is suggesting adding bike

lanes and parking on both sides of the street with traffic in both directions from the Raccoon River to E. 15th St. Director Phipps confirmed the team is only contemplating, at this time, to reduce E. Grand Ave to one lane going east and one lane going west. Chris LoRang stated the data showed before the bridge was closed, one lane each way is plenty of thoroughfares for the vehicle traffic. If the plan is implemented before the bridge is reopened, then people will adapt to the new flow of traffic. The City informed the team they are ready to move forward with the E. 6th St. to Pennsylvanian restriping. The plan is to have conversations with the Capitol Complex to continue to E. 15th St. to set the standard. The Grand Ave. bridge is scheduled to reopen December 2017, if the project stays on the time line.

Director Phipps expressed concern regarding the reduction of the traffic lanes on E. Grand Ave. during the time period from 4:00 pm to 5:30 pm as the State employees leave the Complex as well as the morning traffic as the employees arrive. These time periods can become congested with the volume of vehicles. Larry James responded stating the study is looking at the acceptable level of delay. The team compared the transport time between two points using 3 lanes with a 45 second travel trim to a 2 lane taking 1.5 minutes to travel. The team is looking at the tradeoffs for the project. Director Phipps requested additional data regarding the studies of travel time, congestion, and the team's plans to gather additional traffic data during session. Meg Schneider stated the data collection started in May 2016, which did not include traffic on the Complex during the legislative session. They do have a modeling system to show the traffic flow as the traffic would be compressed to two lanes. The modeling system with the current data will show the change of traffic flow. Larry James informed the members of the meeting the team hired Nelson Nygaard traffic engineering firm to come up with the street designs. The City hired the modeling company to see how the design will affect the traffic flow. The team feels the E. Grand Ave. project is a pilot program with restriping and could revert to the current traffic design if the plan did not work for the Complex. Director Phipps expressed that if we make a change, we would not want to reverse course.

Meg Schneider explained the timing of the project is optimal because the commuters are currently adjusted to a new route due to the construction on the bridge. Meg Schneider pointed out that opening the Grand Ave. bridge with the 5 lanes of traffic then later reducing the lanes to adopt the new traffic design would cause issues for the drivers. The team feels if they take the opportunity now when the street is reopened the change would become the new normal. The modeling data was collected prior to the bridge closure to show the flow of traffic for the entire stretch of E. Grand Ave. including the Complex. Tim Ryburn pointed out the Capitol Planning Commission Master Plan discusses moving the traffic to MLK Parkway for another route into the Complex.

Tim Ryburn also wanted to know if the plan included street parking on the entire E. Grand Ave. Specifically, parking in front of the facilities on the Complex and the image that would create. Director Phipps added that parking on E. Grand Ave. would need to be reviewed from a safety perspective noting the Complex currently has a few cross walks that require enhancements. The addition of parked cars would add another level of concern. Larry James responded the reduction of lanes would result with fewer feet of road to cross, i.e. a 56-foot-wide road would be reduced to a 22-24-foot-wide road meaning the pedestrian crossing would be reduced. Also, noted the street parking inherently slows the moving traffic. Brian Willham mentioned the City has added additional lights to the E 5th St and Grand Ave. intersection; however, the traffic flow remains a high speed with several lanes.

Tim Ryburn inquired about the parking time and how would it be monitored; the Complex has a curfew at 11:00 pm. The free street parking during session would be filled all day with those in the Capitol or the individuals living in East Village. Specifically, what is the team's vision to monitor the street parking with meters or no parking time periods? Meg Schneider noted the City is reviewing the parking study due to the parking behaviors in the East Village. The structure of parking will draw certain behaviors thus the desired behaviors will need to be in mind prior to the final design for parking.

Tim Ryburn pointed out that snow removal around street parking is another challenge that would need to be addressed. Larry James referred to the City of Minneapolis and they have set up 100 miles of protected bike lanes and street parking as earlier discussed. The City of Minneapolis purchased a special plow to remove snow in the bike lane.

Larry James recapped the conversation stating the team does not have all the answers now for the project. The team has 3 examples of traffic design done for downtown Des Moines. 1) E. Locust was one way going east and now two which has slowed the traffic and there was an economic increase for the area. 2) Court Ave. was one way east which caused problems with Sec Taylor Stadium patrons, but now is two-way traffic and doing well. 3) Ingersoll was 4-5 lanes and now 3 lanes with a turning lane. The Ingersoll area traffic volume is the same, but time delay increased 30 seconds. The Ingersoll area commercial real estate rent has risen from \$12 per sq. ft. to \$30 per sq. ft. since 2008.

Carol Grant mentioned she attended the Des Moines Walkability community meeting at the Des Moines Public Library on November 2, 2016. The data that was collected and photos of restriping was very informative. Carol requested a copy of the presentation or the slides with the data to share with the Commission. Carol Grant informed the team the Commission will meet on January 4, 2017, and invited the team to the meeting. Direct Phipps agreed the Commission would need to be apprised of the project. The project will change the look of the facilities on the Complex with cars parked on E. Grand Ave., create a change to the Legislators entrance and exit on E. Grand Ave., as well as changing the main thoroughfare for state employees. Larry James noted the team should have a design but not modeled by December 2016 for the Commission to review. The team would come back to the State to show the design and receive approval.

Brian Willham informed the group the City is looking at a computerized parking meter system that would allow the City to change the parking fee amount during session. Director Phipps reminded the members of the meeting that parking is free on the Complex. E. Grand Ave. is owned by the City and the City would be the authority to determine if there would be a fee for parking. The group agreed that it comes down to the Commission to provide input regarding parking.

Carol Grant reviewed the action items:

- Meg Schneider will send Suzy Trotter the key slides from the public presentation.
- The team will be invited to present at the January 4, 2017 Capitol Planning Commission.

Fundraising plan for the support of SF 2324 Rebuild Iowa Infrastructure Fund

Carol Grant requested the review of the action items from the August 2016 meeting starting with Tim Ryburn.

Tim Ryburn reported:

- The Soldiers and Sailors Monument Observation Report was updated with a break out of costs and distributed to the Site Features Committee members. The report is with Bill Dikis so he can update the Op-ed article accordingly.
- The Capitol Monument Condition Report was updated to include the “Yearly Maintenance Cost” and sent to members in July 2016. Tim will update the report again with the interest rates and the costs that have been expended in 2016.

Carol Grant reported:

- Provided Danny Krock with Tim Ryburn’s revised Soldiers and Sailors Monument Observation Report. Carol will present to the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, January 2017 meeting with an ask for financial support.

- Obtained the list of fundraising consultants on the Community Foundation of Greater Des Moines web page. Carol will find out if those on the list were vetted or simply added to the web page.
- Submitted the grant request for the V.F.W. in the amount of \$1000.00 and was approved. The V.F.W. will send the check to the fundraising efforts. The V.F.W. originally requested a document to trigger the creation of the check; however, the V.F.W. went ahead and sent the check. Tim Ryburn will follow up with DAS Finance, Pam Sullivan. Carol requested that DAS provide a regularly scheduled report for the donations DAS receives. Carol Grant will take the responsibility to send a thank you acknowledgement to the donating groups. The members of the meeting discussed the internal accounting process.
- Glen Dickinson and Dave Heuton created a process to account for the donations from the tour guide desk at the Capitol. Glen Dickinson and Joan Arnett are working on a promotional piece. Director Phipps was under the impression that Tami Wiencek was creating the promotional piece. Carol will follow up on the task to create the promotional piece and who would be responsible to create.
- Carol Grant met with Richard Early of the Des Moines Symphony. Richard Early stated they were so grateful to the State of Iowa for allowing the Des Moines Symphony to do the Pops concerts on the Complex and would do everything possible to help with this project. Richard Early will follow up with the maestro regarding the theme of the concert, Pops sponsors and the Iowa Food Bank. Richard and Carol discussed a process to collect donations with volunteer cadres. Carol Grant will take the lead on the fundraising volunteer cadres.
- Carol Grant will follow up with Bill Dikis regarding the Op-ed article and suggest it be anchored with the Pops concert.
- Carol Grant wants the Committee to continue to contact groups for donations so that when the public request is made with the Op-ed the Committee can show fundraising has begun and groups are donating.
- Hiring a fundraising professional would be an agreement between the Capitol Planning Commission and the individual. Options could be working with a person that would work on commission or donate their time.
- The Commission is not a 501c3 to provide a tax write off for donations.
- Carol Grant will follow up with Margaret Hough regarding The Governor Branstad Iowa History Fund.

Director Phipps reported:

- Other states are in the same position as Iowa and unable to provide creative suggestions for fundraising. Most of the states are bonding for major maintenance. Director Phipps will continue to talk with colleagues.
- Director Phipps requested Tim Ryburn obtain a regular accounting report of the money coming in and an explanation of the draw down.

Adjourn

Meeting adjourned at 11:45am.